

## Domestic tourist numbers surpass 2 crores in 2022: Mahbub Ali

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Chattogram : Bangladesh's tourism sector shows great promise as the domestic tourist numbers have surpassed 2 crores in 2022, compared to 1 crore in 2021. This shows how the country's tourism is growing over time as domestic tourist numbers have doubled in only a year. Even inbound tourist numbers have started to pick up in late 2022, after the coronavirus pandemic. To attract more foreign tourists, the government is intensifying communication and coordination with the neighbouring states and international tourism organisations, developing tourism products, simplifying visa processing procedures, and carrying out creative dynamic marketing.

Md Mahbub Ali, State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism said this in his speech as the Chief Guest at the inauguration ceremony of the 13th edition of the international tourism fair "Air Astra Chittagong

Travel Mart 2023", organised by the premier travel trade publication The Bangladesh Monitor, held on January 5-7 at The Peninsula Chittagong hotel in Chattogram.

"The government is currently preparing a master plan to take country's tourism to international heights while making the development of the sector sustainable. As part of it, various initiatives including the construction of three tourism parks in Chattogram have been taken," added the State Minister in his inaugural address.

Also, Bangladesh Tourism Board (BTB) under the guidance and supervision of the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism has already prepared a tourism recovery plan and 20 guidelines to implement the initiatives to face the challenges of the tourism industry in Bangladesh following the Covid-19 pandemic, to overcome the crisis and gain competitive advantage in the global tourism market in the future. BTB is now working according to the plan, he further noted.

The State Minister mentioned, "The National Tourism Human Capital Development Strategy has been formulated to determine and prepare the number of manpower needed in the tourism industry by the year 2030. Initiatives have been taken to update the National Tourism Policy-2010 as well."



Anjan Shekhor Das, Director, Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Imran Asif, Chief Executive Office, Air Astra; Kazi Wahidul Alam, Editor, The Bangladesh Monitor; and Md Kamrul Islam, General Manager, US-Bangla Airlines also attended the inaugural ceremony of the three-day long international tourism fair.

Anjan Shekhor Das, Director, Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industry, in his speech, stressed the need for better connectivity to exploit the tourism potentials of the Chattogram region.

Addressing the inaugural ceremony, Kazi Wahidul Alam, Editor, The Bangladesh Monitor, said, "Many foreign airlines are willing to operate to the Chattogram airport. However, the airport is not in a position to fulfill the requirements of the airlines. No initiative was taken in the last two decades to modernise and expand the facilities making it unsuitable

for present-day aviation."

However, the State Minister for MoCAT, in his inaugural speech, assured that the government is working on modernising and expanding the Chattogram International Airport currently and a consultant is expected to be appointed soon for this purpose.

24 organisations including airlines, tour operators, hotels, resorts, online travel agencies, hospitals and healthcare service providers, immigration solution companies, and other travel and tourism-related service providers from home and abroad showcased their products and services across 30 stalls at the Chittagong Travel Mart 2023.

Participating organisations offered exciting discounts on air tickets, tour packages, hotel rooms and other tourism products and services for visitors.

The latest edition of the fair received huge response in the market of the port city. In three days, the fair welcomed almost 5000 visitors and recorded BDT 20 crore worth spot sales.

The participating organisations were: US-Bangla Airlines, Air Astra, Goldsands Hotels and Resorts, Dera Resort and Spa, Arshinagar Future Park and Resort, Probashi Palli Group, Cosmos Holiday, Your Travel Limited, Tour East Vacations, World Famous Tours And Travels, Bengal Tours and Travels Ltd, Finlay Travels, Heaven Tours and Resort Ltd, Travel Business Portal, Healthtrip Bangladesh Limited, Trabill, HB Aviation Training Centre, First Trip, Triplover, Travel Champ, The Immigration Service, Lokmanya Hospital from India, Bangkok Hospital Bangladesh Office, and Bumrungrad Hospital Bangladesh Office.

An attractive raffle draw was also held for visitors every day. Raffle prizes included return air tickets to international and domestic destinations, hotel and resort accommodation, among others.

The 13th edition of the fair was supported by the newest private airline of the country Air Astra as the Title Sponsor and powered by one of the leading online travel agencies Buy Tickets.